



# Jeffrey Kent

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## Artist's Statement



*Black Mannequins: Perceptions of Africa Series #3*  
29" x 29", acrylic and collage on canvas, 2012.  
Image courtesy of the artist and Galerie Myrtis

The third painting in the series, *Black Mannequins* is informed by my trip to Italy (Sicily); in it, I address the perception of wealth and notion of "blackness".

During my visit to Italy, on rare occasions I encountered people from the African diaspora. They earned their living washing car windows or assisting party patrons with directions into a parking space for money. In stark contrast to the appearance of their economic and social status were "black-faced" baby mannequins wearing Ferrari outfits. These image of "blackness" served as a symbol of wealth. They were displayed in store windows of high-end fashion toddler boutiques. Its clientele would not be the Africans the mannequins served to emulate for they could not afford the wears. It would be the patrons the Africans served as window washers and valet.

I juxtaposed the Ferrari toddler mannequins with that of the Africans of nobility. Like that of the mannequins, they are adorned with garments that serve as a symbol of their wealth, power and social status.

*Portrait of Don Francisco de la Robe and his sons Pedro and Domingo*, 1599, oil on canvas, Andres Sanchez Gallque, Courtesy Walters Art Museum

